

## Status Change Explanation:

Guinea-Bissau's political rights rating improved from 6 to 5, and its status improved from Not Free to Partly Free, because the 2014 elections—the first since a 2012 coup—were deemed free and fair by international and national observers, and the opposition was able to compete and increase its participation in government.

After several delays, legislative and presidential elections were held in Guinea-Bissau in April 2014 for the first time since a military coup in 2012. A number of new parties competed, and the elections resulted in a victory for the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde (PAIGC), which secured control of the National People's Assembly and the presidency. In September, the president dismissed António Indjai, the man who had led the 2012 coup, from his position as head of the armed forces.

Corruption remains a major problem, bolstered by Guinea-Bissau's prominent role in international drug trafficking and by the government's limited resources to combat it. The international community, encouraged by the elections, has renewed its commitment to support Guinea-Bissau in fighting crime and corruption, modernizing its military, and improving the economy.

## Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

### **Political Rights: 17 / 40 (+8) [Key]**

#### **A. Electoral Process:** 8 / 12 (+5)

Under the constitution, the 102 members of the National People's Assembly are elected by popular vote for four-year terms. The president is elected through a two-round system of voting for a term of five years.

In January 2014, political parties and the military agreed to extend the deadline for voter registration, which had been delayed by technical and logistical issues. This decision led to another delay in holding national elections, which were rescheduled from March to April 2014. The elections had initially been set for November 2013 but were postponed due to financial and planning difficulties.

A total of 13 candidates competed in the presidential election. In the first round, José Mário Vaz of PAIGC won 40.98 percent of the vote, while independent Nuno Gomes Nabiam followed with 24.79 percent. In the second round held in May, Vaz took the presidency by a landslide, winning 61.9 percent of the vote to Nabiam's 38.08 percent.

Fifteen parties competed in the legislative elections. PAIGC took 55 seats in the legislative elections and was allocated two additional seats for diaspora representation, bringing its total to 57 seats. The Party of Social Renewal (PRS) secured 41 seats, the Party for Democratic Convergence (PDC) took two seats, and the Party for a New Democracy (PND) and the Union for Change (UM) won one seat each. Domingos Simões Pereira became prime minister.

Monitoring groups and local human rights organizations reported some instances of intimidation or

beatings of election officials and candidates in the election period. One PRS candidate for the legislature was reportedly kidnapped by unknown armed assailants. Voting was otherwise relatively peaceful and transparent, and the elections were considered free and fair by international observers.

The Supreme Court is empowered to verify the candidacy of applicants in presidential and legislative elections, and is also responsible for handling appeals stemming from elections. In March 2014, Guinea-Bissau's attorney general had issued a formal request to the court calling for the rejection of Vaz's candidacy. The attorney general accused him of embezzling more than \$11.2 million given by Angola as a support grant to Guinea-Bissau when Vaz served as finance minister. The Supreme Court verified his candidacy despite the request.

Death, military coups, or civil war have interrupted the mandate of every elected president in the 40 years since Guinea-Bissau's independence.

## **B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 8 / 16 (+3)**

Dozens of political parties are active in Guinea-Bissau, and 13 of them competed in the 2014 legislative elections. The two largest parties are PAIGC and the PRS. Smaller parties such as the PCD are competitive but institutionally weak. In November 2014, Nabiam established a new party, the United People's Assembly–Democratic Party of Guinea-Bissau.

The limited capacity of the security and justice sectors leads to a lack of effective civilian oversight over the defense and security forces, which has frequently threatened the political process and the functioning of state institutions. The country's 2014 elections, held two years after a military coup, marked a significant improvement in democratic governance. In September 2014, the president dismissed former coup leader Indjai from his position as head of the armed forces, further reducing the role of the military in governance. The new head of the armed forces, Biaguê Nan Tan, publicly declared his intention to instill a commitment to constitutional order within the military.

## **C. Functioning of Government: 1 / 12**

Although the election of legislators and a president in 2014 marked a positive step toward accountability, a number of institutional challenges to governance remained. Throughout the year, multiple ministers removed officials who had been appointed during the transitional government, in some cases replacing them with individuals who had held power or similar positions at the time of the coup.

A Senegalese rebel group, the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), has a presence in the northern parts of Guinea-Bissau. A group of men believed to be MFDC members ambushed a convoy transporting the interior minister in November. The minister resigned shortly after the incident.

Weak governance, a strained economy, and widespread poverty have created an environment conducive to bureaucratic and large-scale corruption through all levels of the government and the military. Guinea-Bissau was ranked 161 out of 175 countries and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government elected in 2014 has voiced commitment to fighting corruption and increasing transparency. In September, Prime Minister Pereira announced that he would disclose his assets, and

required all members of the government to do the same. Officials also announced plans to revive the Ethics Commission, a body charged with monitoring the compliance of legislators and other public servants with various ethical requirements.

## **Civil Liberties: 23 / 60**

### **D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 10 / 16**

Although the constitution provides for freedoms of speech and the press, these freedoms are often restricted. Journalists regularly face harassment and intimidation. According to the president of the local journalists' union, political candidates seeking coverage have offered payment to reporters who do not have the financial resources to cover campaign activities. There are no reports that the government restricts access to the internet, but lack of infrastructure greatly limits penetration.

Religious freedom is legally protected and usually respected in practice. Academic freedom is similarly guaranteed and generally upheld.

### **E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 5 / 12**

In general, the government does not interfere with the freedom of assembly as long as protesters secure the necessary authorizations. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were subject to harassment after the 2012 coup, but many have since become more vocal in their opposition to the transitional government, human rights abuses, and increased economic and social insecurity.

Workers are allowed to form and join independent trade unions, but few work in the wage-earning formal sector. The right to strike is protected, and government workers frequently exercise this right. Teachers, public officials, health care providers, dockworkers, and workers from a number of other sectors organized strikes throughout the year 2014.

### **F. Rule of Law: 3 / 16**

Judges and magistrates are poorly trained, irregularly paid, and highly susceptible to corruption and political pressure. There are essentially no resources to conduct criminal investigations, and none of the country's few formal detention facilities are equipped to handle high-risk prisoners. Weak capacity contributes to lack of accountability, a culture of impunity, and widespread insecurity.

Violence and homicides continue to pose serious problems. In September 2014, the ministry of internal affairs declared a zero tolerance policy for violence in Guinea-Bissau. The announcement followed an attack by private citizens on a police officer in Bissau, and an incident in which a police officer was involved in the beating of a man in São Paulo who eventually died.

Because of its weak institutions and porous borders, Guinea-Bissau has become a major transit point for cartels trafficking illegal narcotics to Europe. The armed forces and some state entities have been linked to drug trafficking, according to the UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

In September 2014, the president issued a decree pardoning six members of the military, including Army Captain Pansau Intchama, who in 2013 had been convicted of plotting against the coup regime.

No laws prohibit same-sex sexual activity, but social taboos and discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people persist.

## **G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 5 / 16**

Illegal exploitation of timber and fish, which increased following the 2012 coup, has caused extensive environmental damage in Guinea-Bissau. During an extraordinary session in 2013, the National People's Assembly requested the government to urgently address the rapid depletion of the few remaining forests and related ecosystems in the country.

Women face significant traditional and societal discrimination, despite some legal protections. They generally do not receive equal pay for equal work, have fewer opportunities in education and employment, and face some restrictions in inheritance and ownership matters. A 2011 law banned female genital mutilation and established penalties of up to five years in prison for violators, but the practice continues. Domestic violence also remains a problem; the parliament passed a law in 2013 that criminalized domestic violence and established support centers for women. Many victims do not press charges due to mistrust of the police or courts. Forced marriages are still common. Trafficking in persons, especially children, is a serious problem, although there is some NGO activity to combat the practice and return trafficked persons to their homes.

### **Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)**

**X = Score Received**

**Y = Best Possible Score**

**Z = Change from Previous Year**

**[Full Methodology](#)**